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ABSTRACT

The paper offers a framework for examining the organization and governance of summer sessions that best support the college or university's institutional mission of teaching. Discussion centers on issues of legitimacy and integrity that arise when summer sessions deviate from the primary responsibility of meeting the academic needs of students. Summer session legitimacy requires an official statement of purpose of an adequate level of organizational authority. Threats to legitimacy and integrity of summer sessions include a lack of institutional acknowledgement of purpose and authority and of the contributions made during the summer term that facilitate student progress toward degrees, faculty employment, use of facilities, and major revenue contributions to the institution. Some administrators may attempt to gain control of summer programs for their special interests especially as summer programs succeed in generating additional revenues. Struggles for the assurance and protection of quality academic programs remain in continuous conflict with obtaining adequate financial support which transcends academic year or summer terms. 10 references. (DB)

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LEGITIMACY AND INTEGRITY OF SUMMER SESSIONS

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LEGITIMACY AND INTEGRITY OF SUMMER SESSIONS

Introduction

Fundamental purposes of colleges and universities are based on commitment to teaching, research and public service. The teaching mission is supported by offering credit courses for resident degree purposes during the regular academic year and summer term. Thus, summer sessions fulfill the academic responsibilities for legitimate institutional purposes by ensuring that appropriate course offerings are available to meet the academic needs of students progressing toward degrees. When summer programs extend beyond or change from this fundamental responsibility of meeting academic needs of students working toward degrees, the integrity of the academic experience is threatened. Consequently, respect for and confidence in summer programs are weakened in the minds of academic deans and resident faculty. The purposes of this paper are to provide a framework for thinking about the organization and governance of summer sessions that best support the legitimate institutional mission of teaching and to point out the legitimacy and integrity issues that prevail when summer sessions deviate from the primary responsibility of meeting academic needs of students.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy means having authority, and authority is "power based on rights of control and concomitant obligations to obey" [2, p. 33]. Summer session programs are legitimate to the degree

to which they have been granted sanction of authority and by the organizational level at which the authority was sanctioned. Summer programs sanctioned by the governing board, the highest and most powerful organizational level, have more institutional authority than summer programs whose purposes have been formulated and approved by a vice-president or lower level administrators in the organization.

Organizational legitimacy of colleges and universities is depicted in institutional charters, policy handbooks, organizational charts, annual planning and evaluation reports, catalogues, and accreditation reports. In these documents are sound descriptions of institutional mission and purposes; official roles and functions of academic schools, divisions, departments and programs; and purposes of non-academic and general administration units. Legitimacy of academic schools, divisions, and departments is usually very clear as reflected in official statements that describe the purposes and activities in these reports. Young and McDougall [10] reported from a 1985 survey of 197 public and private U. S. colleges and universities and 10 Canadian universities that 93% of the respondents indicated that their institutions have written statements of mission that were approved by the governing boards.

Legitimacy of summer session operations within colleges and universities is not very clear. While there is legitimacy of summer sessions reflected in official budgets and organizational charts, the official statements of purpose are elusive in

institutional reports. Very rarely will one find a statement of educational purpose in a summer session catalogue, or an official statement of purpose in an institutional budget, or in planning and evaluation documents. Young and McDougall [10] reported that about 80% of colleges and universities with summer sessions did not have a public, official statement that authorized the purpose of a summer session operation. The lack of acknowledgement of proper mission, role and function of summer sessions was noted also in a 1977 survey of summer session administrators. These individuals reported that one of their major concerns was the unclear role and mission of the summer session as related to the goals of the institution [6]. This neglect in providing purpose statements is a reflection of institutional values related to an organized approach to achieve educational purposes during the summer term.

Organizational location of summer sessions becomes very difficult, or even arbitrary, where legitimate statements of purpose are lacking or assumed. As summer session operations evolved during the 50's and 60's, summer enrollments were largest for public school teachers and administrators, and summer session offices were closely aligned with schools of education. Also, before the 1960s, administrators of summer sessions were most often former professors of education or administrators in extension centers [9]. From the 60's to the present, the most frequent organizational location of summer sessions has been

under an academic vice-president or associate. Other locations of summer session offices vary from answering to chief administrators in continuing education and evening colleges, to decentralizing the entire operation to the academic schools and divisions, to reporting to the Chancellor or President [10].

As the location of the summer session unit moves down the organizational hierarchy, the role and function of the unit become more assumed and diffused. The diffusion weakens the authority to administer budgets and control summer course offerings. In addition, the purposes of summer programs may drift in relation to special interests that threaten the authority and power of summer session administrators.

Decisions to locate a summer session office without judicious consideration of official statements of purpose create a dissonance in decision-making about curriculum, effective teaching and learning, and faculty employment. Also, sound academic planning and evaluation of summer programs become isolated and independent of institutional assessments and planning for degree programs. An academic governance structure which does not provide a means for effective decision making between the summer session administrator and the academic deans results in threats and impediments to integrating the summer course offerings with the regular year programs.

Legitimacy of summer sessions can be reflected also in the institution's culture. This culture is a reflection of institutional values, normative ideals or pragmatic criteria [2].

Institutional values and normative ideals for teaching are similar between the academic year and the summer session. In most instances, except for a few private universities, the faculty employed, students enrolled and courses offered during the summer are the same as during the regular academic year.

The primary legitimate, authorized purpose of the summer session must be to integrate the summer education programs with the regular academic year. In order to assess whether the summer session is academically legitimate, careful examination of the summer session's purposes is necessary to judge whether the programs offered are in compliance with institutional academic purposes, policies and standards. Whenever a summer session unit is located other than under the academic vice-president or associate, special interests of the resident degree programs will be threatened. Summer session units infrequently are found located under continuing education units whose purpose is public service. Inherent in placing the administration of resident degree programs under a public service function creates severe conflicts of interests and hostilities between the academic deans and continuing education administrators. These conflicts are moderated sometimes if the continuing education unit distributes excess revenues back to the academic schools. Without the approval and support of the academic deans and faculty to move the summer resident degree function outside the purview of academic schools to non-academic units, a lack of mutual respect and trust remain and conflicts persist which threaten the

integrity of the summer course offerings and the integrity of the academic governance structure of the institution.

A secondary purpose delegated to the summer session, either formally or assumed, is to generate a designated amount of revenues. Policies which determine tuition rates vary by institutions. Some summer sessions are expected to cover only teaching salaries from tuition revenue. Others expect the summer tuition collected to cover instructional, direct administrative costs of the summer session office plus a percentage return for overhead.

Private institutions are more open in expressing the dilemma that exists in trying to cover instructional costs and generating excess revenues during the summer. A common operating policy in private institutions is to give each academic unit the responsibility to cover direct and indirect instructional costs and to provide a return to the institution for general expenditures of institutional support functions. Centralized budgeting procedures reveal quickly whether or not schools, departments and individual courses cover costs of the summer session through tuition received.

Public institutions are more subtle than private ones in making decisions about course offerings, because tax dollars aid public institutions in support of the teaching purposes. Public aid is based on summer enrollments and in some instances, determined in terms of the number of student-credit-hours and

full-time equivalent students generated. The number of full-time equivalent students generated is the basis for formulating the number of full-time-equivalent faculty positions. Full-time-equivalent faculty positions are funded on formulas of mean salary per position. Thus, summer enrollments, student-credit hours and full-time-equivalent students derivations provide a justification for a certain number of full-time-equivalent faculty positions. In public colleges and universities where state formulas are used to derive the number of faculty positions and instructional salaries needed to operate the institution, excess summer session revenues are not as major a concern as the number of student enrollments. Most summer session operations are very successful and contribute significant numbers of faculty positions to the institutions. Summer sessions which operate under a cost/income policy also contribute significant amounts of revenues to the year-round operation of the institution. Consequently, the summer session budgets and course offerings are supported by course enrollments.

The best interests of the public and the students may not be served if revenues are the driving force in deciding whether or not a program will be offered. The revenue-generating purpose then, must not become the primary focus of summer session. Once the institution sanctions its academic goals and policies, changing these goals and policies primarily to create revenue interferes with the role of summer session as a legitimate academic role and function. Achieving legitimate purposes of the

summer session and simultaneously making a significant financial contribution to the institution require a delicate balancing of focus and management of academic and financial purposes.

The lack of institutional legitimacy reflected in public statements of purpose creates budgeting problems with the summer session administrator. If the institution does not delegate adequate authority to the summer session office in relation to allocation and revenue decisions, the summer session office is left with the responsibility to achieve revenue objectives and manage expenditures without the legitimacy or power to control. It is not uncommon for the charge rates for the summer session and allocation decisions to be determined with minimal or no participation by the summer session administrator. Such practices are unfair and often times lead to financial shortcomings. The summer session administrator is more knowledgeable about the faculty who teach during the summer and students ability to pay than administrators at higher levels. The existence of uncoordinated, nonparticipative approaches to allocation decisions and revenue planning point to the need for a legitimate organizational structure for the summer term where purposes and expectations are sanctioned in institutional policies.

Legitimacy of the summer session programs rests with the sanction of purposes by chief administrators, the governing board or traditional practice of operations. Judgments concerning

whether or not a summer program is achieving authorized purposes are based also on academic rules and standards as set forth and approved by the faculty and academic deans. Some of these academic rules and standards relate to admission, academic probation criteria, degree requirements, needed course offerings, policies for employing faculty to teach, and proper course loads. Legitimacy is judged, therefore, according to compliance with established and accepted institutional rules and standards and in reference to whether or not the institution serves the academic needs and financial abilities of students to progress toward degrees. Colleges and universities have several responsibilities to all students, the most important of which is providing academic programs that will help students make reasonable progress toward a degree. Reasonable progress may require summer study.

Integrity

Integrity of summer sessions is a function of legitimacy. While legitimacy refers to authorized purposes sanctioned by the institution, integrity refers to how well the authorized purposes are achieved. Also, integrity refers to "a composite of qualities involving honesty, trustworthiness, forthrightness, and responsibility . . . a deep commitment to search for the truth and a stalwart resistance to pressures in a contrary decision." [7, p. 20]. Integrity is measured, therefore, not only by stated purposes, but also, by conscientious endeavors to fulfill the

purposes [5].

The success of summer programs has created some serious problems of institutional integrity. As summer session revenues have increased at a greater rate than costs, this has created excess revenues for the institutions. In some institutions, as deans of academic schools noticed their net balances grow, they seized the opportunity to increase revenues for their schools by decentralizing the administration of summer session to the schools or taking successful courses and changing them to non-credit institutes under the school's control. If the institution changes the academic purposes from resident degree purposes to revenue enhancement purposes during the summer, voluntarily or under duress, "then the University loses its integrity and, at least in part, steps out of its characteristic role and ceases to be a University" [3, p. 567].

The nature of budgetary decision processes in the summer term creates concerns for administrative integrity of the summer session. Decision processes which determine what each school and department will receive for summer teaching vary from the decision being made by the chief academic officer or his/her professional staff, to committees of deans and faculty, to the summer session director/dean. In some institutions the summer session director/dean is in control of only small contingency budgets. The most substantive power and influence the summer session administrator possesses, or any administrator has, is that of budgetary control. If a summer session director/dean

does not have power to make budgetary allocation decisions, then the school and deans will ignore the advice of this individual. In addition, if the summer session administrator lacks allocation decision control coupled with a lack of an authorized statement of academic purpose, the summer session will be considered by the academic deans as lacking administrative integrity. Consequently, the summer session administrator is excluded as a responsible, committed member of academic administration from those who are responsible for the quality of summer course offerings.

Financial policies that set rates for tuition and fee charges may also cause problems for an effective summer term. The summer session administrator is similar to other academic deans in the decision process that sets tuition and fee charges. These decisions are usually made by the financial administration during budgetary planning schedules. The role of the summer session administrator varies from a lack of knowledge about the revenue plan to a courteous, communication of the expected revenues, to a target to be achieved during the summer term. When financial policies are determined without sharing the decision with those responsible for achieving the revenue objectives, such an act reflects the institutional values and perception of the integrity and relevance of the summer term to the institution's purposes and motives.

Summer session administrators, however, sometimes extend their activities beyond academic degree purposes. They may

become preoccupied with generating revenues for the institution. These observations may lead one to perceive that summer session's main purpose is not educational but entrepreneurial. Generating revenues can be attained simply by offering favorite and trendy courses and using low paid instructors. Quality of teaching and meeting academic needs of degree students are neglected when educational integrity is replaced with motives of generating excess revenues for profit. When net balances or profits become a substantive purpose of summer programs, usually the summer session office will be located under the non-academic administration, continuing education or evening colleges administrative units.

While costs are a concern for colleges and universities, the need for revenue generation should not change the substantive purposes of summer session from academic concerns to a concern-for-profit business. Costs should be a factor in summer session only in-so-far-as students' abilities to pay is not a deterrent to progress toward degrees in the summer, the facilities made available for student enrollments, and ability to employ quality faculty. Costs must not be the determining factor, for example, in choosing between a revenue-generating workshop or conference and hiring fully-tenured faculty to offer quality instruction to meet academic needs of degree students.

Integrity of a summer program is weakened when academic distinctiveness is replaced with emphasis on generating income by offering trendy courses, hiring low paid instructors, recruiting

primarily students unable to achieve successfully during the regular year, and replacing regular academic year courses taught by academic year faculty with courses taught by adjunct or visiting faculty who possess easy grading standards. When administering the summer session from a business point of view, there is a tendency to "look with skepticism at programs that are not cost-effective" [3, p. 567]. In these situations, academic needs of students are lost as is the academic integrity of the institution.

Recognizing the vast numbers of students enrolled in summer sessions, consideration and selection of the faculty who teach these classes are essential to academic integrity. In order to comply with accepted academic standards as a legitimate academic experience, summer session must not be taken less seriously than the regular academic year by teaching faculty or the administrators who hire faculty. Cost is often cited as one of the main criteria for hiring a large number of graduate instructors during the summer -- hiring fully-tenured faculty increase the University's costs during the summer. Using costs as the singular factor in deciding the quality of faculty who teach in the summer threatens the integrity of the academic program.

The issue of students' ability to pay versus profits is also crucial to summer session integrity. In order to understand fully the institution's responsibilities to students, it is necessary to examine why students enroll in summer session as

well as how students are affected by academic decisions that are based on the profit motive. The students enrolled during summer session are comprised primarily of regular year undergraduate and graduate students, incoming first-years and transfers, high school students, students from other colleges, professionals and adults. Many factors are involved in students' decisions to give up summer work or leisure time for academic pursuits. Among these are lightening the regular year course load, making up credit hours due to previous withdrawal from a class, meeting transfer requirements, taking a class that the student was unable to take during the regular year, obtaining professional certification, and achieving personal enhancement. Many of the students enroll in special academic programs such as summer foreign language institutes and field courses that are not offered during the regular year. These programs broaden the academic experiences for the student outside the classroom.

Summer sessions have little or no control over admissions and enrollments during the summer term. The nature of summer enrollments is based on academic policies and student academic needs which require or encourage students to attend summer classes. If the academic schools are forthright and communicate changes in policies which affect summer enrollments, the integrity of the summer session is upheld and course offerings will be considered in relation to the policy changes. For example, a change in academic probation policies may require some students to attend summer session, and the summer session can

support the academic needs of students if properly informed. Treating the summer session administration in a forthright and responsible manner by academic deans is a substantive reflection of the integrity of the summer term.

Academic integrity of summer session programs is exemplified in commitments to students with special needs, minorities and athletes. Varsity athletes provide valuable entertainment services and development functions for the University. These athletes depend on an academically sound summer curriculum to enable them to continue progress toward a degree. Because of heavy demands for practice and performance, many athletes are unable to complete degrees during eight regular semesters. Summer Prep, Summer Transition, and Bridge programs also help establish the credibility and integrity of the institution's attitude toward affirmative action and equal educational opportunity. These programs are designed to help some incoming first year students from rural areas and small high schools, especially those students who have weak backgrounds in composition, mathematics and science to make a successful transition from high school to college-level classes. These students are not usually below admissions standards, but institutions judge that they would gain invaluable experience by taking classes that would narrow the gap of academic preparation received by students from large, comprehensive secondary schools. Institutional integrity is strengthened by these commitments to all students, including minorities, students from rural areas,

and athletes. The institution fulfills its goal of offering multiple educational opportunities both during the regular academic year and summer session for students to complete a degree program.

Integrity of summer sessions, like legitimacy, is judged by administrative practices, academic program strategies and financial policies in relation to legitimate purposes of the summer session. Most colleges and universities have sanctioned the summer sessions with the singular purpose of teaching. That is, the summer session is expected to meet the academic needs of resident degree students by offering the highest quality of instruction possible.

Summary and Conclusions

Legitimacy and integrity of summer sessions mean having sanctioned authority of academic purpose and how well these purposes are achieved, respectively. Summer session legitimacy is defined in terms of an official statement of purpose and the organizational level at which the authority is sanctioned. Threats to legitimacy and integrity of summer session programs include a lack of institutional acknowledgement of purpose and authority and the contributions made during the summer term in terms of facilitating student progress toward degrees, employment of faculty, use of facilities and major revenue contributions to the institution. One of the most profound threats to an effective summer term is due to the tremendous success of summer

programs in providing additional revenues to the institution and the attempts by administrators to gain control for their special interests, motives and values.

Ethical considerations of the legitimacy and integrity of summer sessions are based on power concerns about what should be done, why and by whom. Struggles for the assurance and protection of quality of academic programs that meet student needs remain in continuous conflict with obtaining adequate financial support which transcends academic year or summer terms. Institutional ethics and integrity of summer programs, therefore, rest with organizational legitimacy and values with regard to quality course offerings and effective teaching during the summer. The future of summer session influence and survival must rest on the highest academic quality possible for colleges and universities.

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